

founding. I am proud to join citizens across the Granite State in recognizing this special occasion.

Thornton is a gateway community to New Hampshire's beautiful White Mountains—welcoming visitors from near and far throughout the year. This picturesque community represents the very best of New Hampshire's proud heritage.

The land that would become Thornton was granted in a charter by Governor Benning Wentworth on July 6, 1763, one of New Hampshire's great statesmen, to a small group of settlers including Doctor Matthew Thornton. Thornton later represented New Hampshire as a representative to the Continental Congress, and signed the Declaration of Independence. The town was named to honor Thornton for his service to New Hampshire.

The town's population has grown to include over 2,400 residents. The patriotism and commitment of the people of Thornton are reflected in part by their record of service in defense of our Nation.

Notable Thornton residents include 19th century abolitionist Moses Cheney, a conductor with the Underground Railroad, and MIT professor and nutritionist Nevin S. Scrimshaw.

Thornton is home to one of the oldest remaining meetinghouses in the State. Erected in 1789, the Old Town House is listed on the New Hampshire State Register of Historic Places and serves as an enduring symbol of New Hampshire's tradition of self-governance.

Thornton is a place that has contributed much to the life and spirit of the Granite State. I am pleased to extend my warm regards to the people of Thornton as they celebrate the town's 250th anniversary.●

TRIBUTE TO RITA NEEDHAM

● Mr. BLUNT. Madam President, as we continue our debate about health care reform, I would like to recognize an organization in Missouri that has been a leader in innovation in driving down the healthcare costs for manufacturers and their employees. The Missouri Association of Manufacturers and their CEO, Rita Needham, have been at the forefront of the debate in my State. She is committed to new strategies to provide affordable health care through consortiums of manufacturers that employ more than 2,100 people.

As an educator, human resource manager and administrator, Rita Needham joined the Southwest Area Missouri Association, SAMA, in 1999 as community affairs director. SAMA reached out to support manufacturers in the Springfield, MO area. Needham was elevated to executive director 2 years later and created a health care consortium which provided affordable health care coverage for manufacturers.

Rita was the driving force in obtaining a two-year waiver from the Missouri Department of Insurance to en-

able companies of all sizes to join together in a pilot program to purchase group health insurance. Before the consortium was created, the initial 32 companies who joined the SAMA I Consortium had to buy their health insurance individually, but, under the consortium, they were rated as one policy holder therefore achieving significant savings. Six smaller companies who were part of the consortium were able to access affordable health care for the first time. The consortium members were able to achieve long term rate stability, create large group buying power and reduce claim risk in response to their biggest concern—the rising costs of health care.

In 2006, Rita led SAMA's efforts to persuade the Missouri General Assembly to pass House bill 1827, landmark legislation known as the SAMA bill, which allowed manufacturers of all sizes the option of purchasing a group health plan under the consortium.

In 2010, the Southwest Area Manufacturers Association became the Missouri Association of Manufacturers, MAM, with 170 member companies across the State representing 14,500 employees. Today, MAM is a strong voice for manufacturing with free market positions on trade, regulation, tax and energy policy, education, health care and the environment.

Rita is planning to retire this year, but throughout her career she has been a thoughtful, dedicated leader for Missouri manufacturers. I have always relied on her expertise and common sense to better understand how Federal policy impacts health costs for manufacturers.

I wish Rita and her husband Jim a wonderful retirement. There is no doubt that Rita's advocacy and smart leadership have improved the business environment in Missouri.●

LAS VEGAS NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM

● Mr. HELLER. Madam President, I wish to recognize the Las Vegas Natural History Museum and congratulate it on being awarded national accreditation by the American Alliance of Museums. This accreditation is the highest national recognition of a museum's commitment to public service, professional standards, and excellence in education. This important milestone exemplifies the remarkable progress that the Las Vegas Natural History Museum has made, and attests to the central role the museum plays in educating the local community.

For more than 2 decades, the Las Vegas Natural History Museum has provided Nevadans of all ages and from all walks of life the opportunity to explore the natural treasures of our past. The museum has expanded the small, loaned exhibit with which it began into a premiere, multi-million dollar collection of wildlife and prehistoric exhibits. Today it offers a truly unique educational experience from which count-

less Nevadans have benefited. Under the leadership of Executive Director Marilyn Gillespie, as well as a dedicated board of directors, the Las Vegas Natural History Museum has completed a demanding process in order to become nationally accredited. The museum and its leadership team should be proud of this important achievement.

Centers of learning such as the Las Vegas Natural History Museum enrich our communities by making the learning process an engaging and exciting endeavor. I ask my colleagues to join me in congratulating this exceptional museum and extend my best wishes for many more successful years to come.●

FAITH LUTHERAN MOCK TRIAL TEAM

● Mr. HELLER. Madam President, I wish to recognize an outstanding achievement by a group of hard-working students at Faith Lutheran Junior/Senior High School in Las Vegas. The Faith Lutheran Mock Trial team has been invited to compete in the Seventh Annual Empire Invitational in New York City, and is the first ever Nevada team to be invited to compete in this mock trial event.

Faith Lutheran's mock trial program is part of the school's justice and advocacy program, which is designed to prepare and equip students for academic and professional paths in public policy, law and advocacy. It is notable achievement to be invited to the Empire Invitational event, which is the only mock trial tournament in the country that hosts schools from Canada, Ireland and the United Kingdom. By competing in this year's tournament, Faith Lutheran's mock trial participants will not only receive invaluable experience applying legal principles, but they will also enhance skills that are critical to their future scholastic and vocational success.

Educational activities such as this mock trial tournament open the door to increased possibilities for young students to make a difference in their communities. Faith Lutheran's mock trial team serves as an admirable example to aspiring students across the Silver State.

This special achievement is the result of many hours of teamwork, effort and preparation. The dedicated students and faculty who are part of Faith Lutheran's mock trial team should be immensely proud of the opportunity to represent their school, and the State of Nevada, at this year's Empire Invitational. I ask my colleagues to join me in commending these exceptional students, and wish them a successful and memorable experience at the tournament.●

TRIBUTE TO BECKY NELSON

● Mr. JOHNSON of South Dakota. Mr. President, today I wish to recognize and congratulate Becky Nelson of Sioux Falls, SD for over 38 years of service with Sanford Health.

In 1971, Ms. Nelson graduated from Presentation College in Aberdeen, SD, and began her career at Dakota Midland Hospital. In 1975, Ms. Nelson joined Sioux Valley Hospital & Health System, which would later become Sanford Health. Starting as a critical care staff nurse, Ms. Nelson's skill and intellect launched her into clinical leadership positions.

Today, Ms. Nelson is Sanford Health's senior vice president & chief operating officer, overseeing all patient care services provided by Sanford Health's northern and southern regions, encompassing parts of South Dakota, North Dakota, and Minnesota.

In addition to her outstanding work at Sanford Health, Ms. Nelson remains an active leader in the community. She has served on the First National Bank board of directors as well as the Boards of the University of Sioux Falls, Sanford Research/USD, Washington Pavilion of Arts and Science, and the Sioux Falls Development Foundation.

Ms. Nelson's devotion to exceptional care will continue to benefit South Dakotans and Midwesterners long after her retirement. She is an exceptional role model who has a positive impact on those who cross her path. For example, her soon-to-be successor, Nate White, whom she is currently mentoring, commented, "There isn't a day that goes by when there isn't something I grasp onto and say, I have to remember that." Clearly, her excellent example resonates with her peers.

I thank Ms. Nelson for her incalculable contributions to our community and wish her and her husband, Dave, all the best in retirement.●

MESSAGES FROM THE PRESIDENT

Messages from the President of the United States were communicated to the Senate by Mr. Williams, one of his secretaries.

EXECUTIVE MESSAGES REFERRED

As in executive session the Presiding Officer laid before the Senate messages from the President of the United States submitting sundry nominations which were referred to the appropriate committees.

(The messages received today are printed at the end of the Senate proceedings.)

TRANSMITTING THE AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC ON SOCIAL SECURITY, CONSISTING OF A PRINCIPAL AGREEMENT AND AN ADMINISTRATIVE AGREEMENT—PM 19

The PRESIDING OFFICER laid before the Senate the following message from the President of the United States, together with an accompanying report; which was referred to the Committee on Finance:

To the Congress of the United States:

Pursuant to section 233(e)(1) of the Social Security Act, as amended by the Social Security Amendments of 1977 (Public Law 95-216, 42 U.S.C. 433(e)(1)) (the "Social Security Act"), I transmit herewith an Agreement on Social Security between the United States of America and the Slovak Republic (the "United States-Slovak Republic Totalization Agreement"). The Agreement consists of two separate instruments: a principal agreement and an administrative arrangement. The Agreement was signed in Bratislava on December 10, 2012.

The United States-Slovak Republic Totalization Agreement is similar in objective to the social security totalization agreements already in force with most European Union countries, Australia, Canada, Chile, Japan, Norway, and the Republic of Korea. Such bilateral agreements provide for limited coordination between the United States and foreign social security systems to eliminate dual social security coverage and taxation and to help prevent the lost benefit protection that can occur when workers divide their careers between two countries. The United States-Slovak Republic Totalization Agreement contains all provisions mandated by section 233 of the Social Security Act and other provisions that I deem appropriate to carry out the purposes of section 233, pursuant to section 233(c)(4) of the Social Security Act.

I also transmit for the information of the Congress a report prepared by the Social Security Administration explaining the key points of the United States-Slovak Republic Totalization Agreement, along with a paragraph-by-paragraph explanation of the provisions of the principal agreement and administrative arrangement. Annexed to this report is another report required by section 233(e)(1) of the Social Security Act on the effect of the United States-Slovak Republic Totalization Agreement on income and expenditures of the U.S. Social Security program and the number of individuals affected by the United States-Slovak Republic Totalization Agreement.

BARACK OBAMA.

THE WHITE HOUSE, September 17, 2013.

MEASURES READ THE FIRST TIME

The following bills were read the first time:

H.R. 2009. An act to prohibit the Secretary of the Treasury from enforcing the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act and the Health Care and Education Reconciliation Act of 2010.

H.R. 2775. An act to condition the provision of premium and cost-sharing subsidies under the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act upon a certification that a program to verify household income and other qualifications for such subsidies is operational, and for other purposes.

S. 1513. A bill to amend the Helium Act to complete the privatization of the Federal helium reserve in a competitive market fashion that ensures stability in the helium markets while protecting the interests of American taxpayers, and for other purposes.

ion that ensures stability in the helium markets while protecting the interests of American taxpayers, and for other purposes.

S. 1514. A bill to save coal jobs, and for other purposes.

EXECUTIVE AND OTHER COMMUNICATIONS

The following communications were laid before the Senate, together with accompanying papers, reports, and documents, and were referred as indicated:

EC-2861. A communication from the Secretary of Health and Human Services, transmitting, pursuant to law, an annual report relative to the activities of the Office of the Medicare Ombudsman; to the Committee on Finance.

EC-2862. A communication from the Acting Assistant Secretary, Bureau of Political-Military Affairs, Department of State, transmitting, pursuant to law, an addendum to a certification, transmittal number: DDTC 2013-1056, of the proposed sale or export of defense articles and/or defense services to a Middle East country regarding any possible affects such a sale might have relating to Israel's Qualitative Military Edge over military threats to Israel; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

EC-2863. A communication from the Acting Assistant Secretary, Bureau of Political-Military Affairs, Department of State, transmitting, pursuant to law, an addendum to a certification, transmittal number: DDTC 2013-1288, of the proposed sale or export of defense articles and/or defense services to a Middle East country regarding any possible affects such a sale might have relating to Israel's Qualitative Military Edge over military threats to Israel; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

EC-2864. A communication from the Acting Assistant Secretary, Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report consistent with the Authorization for Use of Military Force Against Iraq Resolution of 1002 (P.L. 107-243) and the Authorization for the Use of Force Against Iraq Resolution (P.L. 102-1) for the April 21, 2013-June 19, 2013 reporting period; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

EC-2865. A communication from the Assistant Secretary, Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to amendment to part 126 of the International Traffic in Arms Regulations (ITAR); to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

EC-2866. A communication from the Acting Assistant Secretary of State, Legislative Affairs, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to the interdiction of aircraft engaged in illicit drug trafficking; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

EC-2867. A communication from the Assistant Legal Adviser for Treaty Affairs, Department of State, transmitting, pursuant to the Case-Zablocki Act, 1 U.S.C. 112b, as amended, the report of the texts and background statements of international agreements, other than treaties (List 2013-0142-2013-0149); to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

EC-2868. A communication from the Assistant Legal Adviser for Treaty Affairs, Department of State, transmitting, pursuant to the Case-Zablocki Act, 1 U.S.C. 112b, as amended, the report of the texts and background statements of international agreements, other than treaties (List 2013-0136-2013-0141); to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

EC-2869. A communication from the Assistant Legal Adviser for Treaty Affairs, Department of State, transmitting, pursuant to the Case-Zablocki Act, 1 U.S.C. 112b, as amended,